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THE OUTCOME OF THE SOUTHERN RACE QUESTION.

BY ALBERT BUSHNELL HART.

EVER since the earliest Colonial days two distinct centres of social and political life have existed in Anglo-Saxon America,—the South and the North; both sprung from about the same social strata in England, the bone and sinew in each case made up of yeomen and artificers, with a sprinkling of gentry. Differences, first of climate and pursuits, then of social, and especially of labor, systems early sprang up and have continued to the present day; so that the Northerner in the South and the Southerner in the North both find something unfamiliar, striking, perhaps unwelcome. Still, the mutual acquaintance and respect acquired through four years of intimate enmity, through travelling back and forth on both sides of the line, through the common interest in orders, churches, fraternities and learned societies, have gone far to break down artificial barriers. Men from the North and South may be warm, and even intimate, friends; may recognize in each other kindred aims; may stand together in the onward march of civilization; but they have different problems to solve and seem to each other to apply different standards.

Those problems are in both sections based upon labor and capital; the Northern man is perplexed by the immigrant, the trades union, the employers' association, and the trust. Most of these issues the Southern man experiences in less degree; but the vast and absorbing problem before him is that of the relation of two races: for emancipation did not remove the fundamental difficulty—the presence of a non-European race, formerly servile, and permanently inferior to the white race in capacity and power of progress. The old abolitionists, the emancipators, and the framers of the reconstruction acts, were all affected by the belief,

which seemed justified by the experience of foreign immigrants, that freedom would bring out a latent manhood, would develop a sense of responsibility. If, as many people supposed, the negro were a black white man, a belated scion of civilization, the race problem would now be very different; but forty years' experience has shown that though individual negroes, especially those having some white blood, show high capacity and some of them rise to greatness, and though most individuals of the race can profit by education, still the average of the negro race is much below that of the white race. The negroes as a people have less self-control, are less affected by ultimate advantages, are less controlled by family ties and standards of personal morality, than the average even of those white people, immigrants or natives, who have the poorest chance and are the least educated and civilized.

Alongside this race difference is a race prejudice, which, though it ultimately rests on a feeling of superiority, would probably be even more active if the races were equal. It is the feeling of the Irishman for the Hungarian, of the Southwesterner for the Mexican, intensified by the fact that the negroes have so recently been the bondslaves of the whites. This strong race feeling, from which the North is not free, is an absorbing difficulty in the South because the negroes are so widely distributed. Outside of the mountains and some hill districts, they are found in large numbers in every State, every city, and nearly every county. In the two States of Mississippi and South Carolina, they are more numerous than the whites; and in some localities, such as the Yazoo Delta in Mississippi, the Black Belt of Louisiana, and the Sea Islands, they are ten to one or even a hundred to one. Almost every community in the South, therefore, has its share in the troubles that come about from the existence of two unequally matched races living side by side; one of which has most of the property and directs the industrial enterprises, while the other furnishes the greater part of the hired labor of the South.

Some Southern writers are inclined to make little of the race question, but most intelligent people as well as the influential newspapers and periodicals not only perceive a danger but dwell upon it and expand it. The remedies proposed take on every variety of form, but may be reduced to six groups of suggestions: the remedy of fusion; the remedy of race separation; the remedy of legislation; the remedy of violence; the remedy of vassalage;

and the remedy of uplift. To these various ideas in succession this article will be devoted.

I.—Remedy of Fusion.—Alongside of the conception of race superiority, and in part dependent upon it, is the well-founded belief of nearly all the whites that amalgamation would be a great misfortune for the community. Nevertheless, one hears occasionally the prediction that the mixture of the races will be the eventual outcome. A reason for this belief, which few entertain and fewer express, is the supposed experience of mankind. It is urged over and over again that history presents no example of two races living side by side indefinitely without uniting. Still more striking is the fact that there is already a partial mixture of the two races: out of the ten million people classed as negroes, probably two million have some white blood, and of these something like three hundred thousand to five hundred thousand are the children of white fathers. That miscegenation has gone on, and is still going on to an unknown degree, heightens the alarm and makes the South more determined that there shall at least be no legalized admixture of the races. Nor are examples lacking of two peoples living for centuries side by side with little mixture: Mohammedans and Hindoos, in India, have been separate for centuries; the English colonies in North America exterminated the Indians with very little race connection. Amalgamation could only be accomplished by a change in white sentiment about as probable as the Mormonization of the Northern whites; and, if it were possible, it would lead to a new and worse race question, the rivalry of a mixed race occupying the whole South against a white race in the rest of the country, which would make all present troubles seem a pleasant interlude. Amalgamation as a remedy welcomed by the Southern whites is unthinkable; as a remedy against their convictions, brought about by time, it is highly unlikely.

II.—Remedy of Race Separation.—Realizing the clash of races, a group of writers and agitators urges that the races be mechanically separated. The most obvious means would be to send the negro race out of the country, an idea now more than a century old, but hedged about with impossibilities. The first is the financial difficulty: to carry away and establish ten million people in some other part of the world would cost not less than two thousand million dollars, which must be paid by a people

depleted by the removal of ten millions of its productive population. In the second place, would a world which still has tears for the Acadians deported from Nova Scotia in 1755, be impressed with the high civilization of a nation which should send ten million people to their death in a continent where neither Briton, Frenchman, Portuguese, nor German, with all their resources, prudence and medical skill, can live? In the third place, there is not a State, city or county populous with negroes in the South which would not resent, and if need be resist, the sudden taking away of its laborers.

A milder suggestion is that the essential negro be slowly and quietly replaced by somebody else. What somebody else? Shall it be Northerners? Northern settlers in the South are few, and in any case do not replace the negro laborer for wages. Hence the only hope of a new contingent of plantation hands is in foreign immigration, which shall be vigorous enough to supersede the negro. Great efforts have been made in the last few years to induce foreigners to settle in the South: several States have set up immigration bureaus; at the immigrant station on Ellis Island immigrants are informed of the opportunities in the South; last year the government of South Carolina paid the passages of about five hundred immigrants; and a few plantations in Louisiana and Mississippi are manned by Italians or Bulgarians. Yet, so far, the whole attempt has been a failure. Outside of Texas only about five thousand immigrants landed in the South in twelve months. The few Italians who have been a few years in the country have no intention of spending their lives as plantation laborers; they work so well that they save money enough to do something that they like better. The South Carolina immigrants were so discontented, and wrote home such complaints, that the steamship companies would bring no more; and Mr. Gadsden, Commissioner of the State, reports that "Our attitude throughout the South to white labor will have to be materially altered before we can expect to have the immigrant satisfied to remain as a laborer with us."

If the negroes can neither be removed nor replaced, would the races get on more harmoniously by living in separate communities? There are many counties and a few towns into which negroes are not allowed to come; there are perhaps half a dozen negro villages in which no white man lives. Such negro towns

(of which Mound Bayou, Mississippi, is the best known) seem to be as thriving as the neighboring white places, and furnish an opportunity for the negro professional man, banker and business man. It has been suggested that the principle might be extended by permitting the negroes to take over some State and carry it on as a negro community. The instant query is, Which State? For the whites are everywhere in the ascendant, and have not the remotest intention of abandoning any of the communities that they control.

The only other way of diminishing race pressure is the so-called "race segregation," which means that in every city and town the negroes are to occupy separate quarters, go to separate schools, ride in separate sections of the street cars, use separate sidewalks, buy in separate stores, have separate churches, places of amusement, social organizations, banks and insurance companies. Race segregation on a large scale is impossible, because the greater part of the rural negroes are dependent on white landowners and merchants for their rented land or employment or advances. The Southern business man is hardly likely to look quietly on a new commercial organization in which the negro retail trade shall go wholly to negro merchants. The thing which most ameliorates race relations is the dependence of the negro on white employers, and the dependence of many lines of business on negro custom.

III.—Remedy of Legislation.—If the races are to live side by side, cannot something be done to keep them in harmony by special legislation directed against the propensities of the lowest class? There is a movement against negro dives, some of which are loathsome places, but often with white proprietors and white customers. Perhaps an efficient vagrant law might bring upon the hopelessly idle negroes—the sponges of their race—the dread punishment of work. The vagrant laws of the South, however, play into an iniquitous system by which sheriffs make money in proportion to the number of prisoners and the length of time they spend in jail. The wave of prohibition which is now dashing over the South is due, in great part, to the conviction of employers of labor in cotton mills, in industries and on the plantations, that they lose money because their laborers are irregular and unreliable through drunkenness. If the movement is intended to shut off the stream from the white man's throat

as well as from the dusky man's, it will probably increase both earnings and savings. Perhaps the legislation that is most needed is an efficient system of rural mounted police, something like the old patrols. Bills for that purpose in Georgia and South Carolina have, however, been resisted on the ground that white men might be obliged to give an account of themselves as well as negroes. The real difficulty of reform by legislation is that it does not necessarily raise the character of either element of the population, and that it very little affects the spirit of race hostility.

IV.—Remedy of Violence.—The remedy most frequently invoked in the South, most widely applied and most strenuously defended, is to terrorize the negro. Everybody knows that human life is less sacred in the South than in almost any other part of the civilized world. Fierce and ungovernable passions, assassinations and street brawls (usually miscalled duels) are shockingly frequent in both races. White men are occasionally killed by negroes, negroes are frequently killed by white men. Against the negro some public speakers and many newspapers are constantly exciting prejudice and rancor. Thomas Dixon, Jr., has in the most public manner asserted that nobody can believe that the white race "will allow the negro to master his industrial system, take the bread from his mouth, crowd him to the wall and place a mortgage on his house. . . . What will he do when put to the test? He will do exactly what his white neighbor in the North does when the negro threatens his bread—kill him." This is an incitement to murder men, not because they do ill, but because they make themselves of use to the community in which they live. Of course, the whole South cannot be held responsible for such sanguinary utterances; but upon whom shall the burden of crime be laid for the Atlanta riots of last year, in which, according to the testimony of resident white men, not one of the ten negroes killed was a criminal or so much as charged with any offence; and in which twenty white men known to be murderous rioters were indicted for misdemeanor, and not one has ever been brought to trial?

The readiest form of terror is lynching and the threat of lynching, a system about which many people in the South hold a series of conventional beliefs, many of which have been uprooted by Dr. Cutler's recent book on "Lynch Law." It seems

to be commonly believed in the South that lynching is a widely distributed practice; that it is seldom applied except to negroes, and to them only for the crime of rape. Dr. Cutler shows that, of late years, there are hardly any lynchings in the Eastern and Central States of the North; that, of 3,328 recorded lynchings from 1882 to 1903, 2,060 were of negroes, of whom 707 (an average of 32 a year) were lynched for supposed violence to women, 816 for murder, and the remainder for all sorts of offences, down to refusing to give testimony. That a community like the South, with such a proud sense of the supremacy of the white race, should be thrown into a frenzy of excitement by the deeds of less than a hundred abandoned negroes every year out of about three million adult black men, is one of the strange and terrible things in the situation; but no stranger than that for the crimes of those hundred men ten million of their race should be held responsible.

Some things, however, do not go by statistics, and the thirty or forty crimes of violence every year affright the whole white population. Perhaps something might be accomplished by special courts set up on the model of similar tribunals in slavery times, with power to deal with certain aggravated crimes outside the technicality of ordinary criminal law. If the negroes would deliver up those of their own number whom they suppose to have committed such crimes, they would do much to relieve the tension. Lynching is approved by most Southern whites, as is shown by the fact that nobody has ever been severely punished in the South for taking part in a lynching; but it is the worst and most ineffective of remedies for race troubles. Lynchings frequently degenerate into mere orgies of blood. As a young Southern white says: "You don't understand how we feel down here: when there is a row, we feel like killing a nigger whether he has done anything or not." These extraordinary remedies are not necessary if the white people of the South will make their own courts and sheriffs do their duty, insist on speedy trials and swift and orderly punishment, and disgrace and drive out of society men who take upon themselves the hangman's office.

V.—*The Remedy of Vassalage*.—Northerners hardly realize how different are the conditions of labor and industry in the South from those with which they are familiar at home. The Northern agricultural "hired man" frequently sits at the family

table; in the South there is still the relation of master and hand, and a tendency to keep the field negroes in a low and stationary condition. A large plantation is a workshop rather than a farm; rich cotton lands mean wealth only if the owner can find good laborers; but there are few planters who are willing to break up their holdings and sell them out to small farmers, because that takes away their occupation. The negro is therefore likely to be valued, not at what he can produce under the most favorable circumstances, but at the profit which he can make for his landlord or employer as a field laborer on wages.

The tendency of this system is to make the negro at best a peasant, and that is a word which is unwelcome in America. The European peasant is an hereditary laborer, usually on the land of another, who leaves it to other people to carry on the state; and that is not far from the present status of more than half the negroes in the South. The question is whether that is a permanent relation, or whether the negro will improve till he can provide for himself—work his own land or become a tenant on advantageous terms. To settle down on a peasant system would mean that the South must remain in the lower stage of economic progress which goes with such a system.

Even where the negro is working the little tract of twenty to thirty acres which is the ordinary tenant farm, or where he is on his own land, he is usually the dependent of some white man. To be sure, the same is true of the small white farmer and even of the considerable planter. The system under which a large part of the land-workers of the South have spent a year's income before their annual crop is sold, with its accompaniments of crop mortgages, debt, usury and occasional ruin, is one of the principal obstacles to the economic advance of which the South is capable, and accents race hostility.

One concomitant of the advance system is peonage, which in its mildest form means that nobody is expected to hire a negro who owes a debt to his employer unless the new master pays that debt and transfers it to himself. The negro who leaves his crop unfinished is in many cases simply pursued and brought back, without bothering sheriffs or juries. In a more aggravated form, peonage is the transfer and sale of a man's services through the operation of iniquitous laws and courts. The Southern States all, by law or constitutional enactments, prohibit im-

prisonment for debt; but several of them also have laws under which the laborer who incurs a debt which he cannot pay is considered to be guilty of "false pretences" and subject to the same punishment as though he had stolen the money; being convicted, and fined as a punishment, he may then be turned over by the court to some planter to work out his fine, not unlikely to the employer with whom he has just had a row. In its worst form peonage is the virtual slavery of a man or woman who, either under color of one of these leases of convicts, or in sheer defiance of all law, is compelled to serve on terms made by his master. Nobody knows how much or how little there is of this aggravated form of peonage, but there have been a dozen or more trials and a few convictions. Nevertheless, one of those slave-keepers in Alabama—the Legree of this decade—who about two years ago whipped a woman peon to death, has never suffered the slightest punishment for that misdeed. Of all the remedies for race troubles this is the worst, both because it is a hateful perversion of the power of the superior race, and because it discourages and enrages a thousand laborers for every one whose forced labor is thus secured.

. VI.—*The Remedy of Uplift.*—All the remedies so far suggested for the acknowledged difficulties in the South are based upon the idea that the negro can be improved only by some forcible process that is distasteful to him; but the regeneration of a race, as of mankind, must proceed from within and work outward. The most obvious remedy for race troubles is, if possible, to bring both races up to a higher plane, where thrift, intelligence and reason shall have more sway. The white race is visibly on the up grade; the old-fashioned poor white described by Olmsted and sketched by Porte Crayon can scarcely be found anywhere in the South outside of the mountains; the backwoodsman has at last waked up to the fact that, in his turpentine, his timber, the minerals under his land, he has the elements of wealth; he is building better houses, providing better schools, raising better crops. Can the negro come up to a similar standard; and will he be allowed to reach it if he can? The general opinion of white people upon the ground is that a part of the race, probably one-fourth or one-fifth, is doing reasonably well and getting forward in the world. All over the South some negroes are buying land, which, once paid for, they cling to

with all their might. There is a wide-spread belief in the South that the negroes have retrograded since slavery times. That impression appears to be due, in large part, to the negroes in the small towns, who have left the plantations and find no steady employment such as is open to them in large cities. The negro is not industrious or steady as a domestic or an odd-job man; but on the land, in the sawmills and the turpentine forests, he works about as well as white wage-hands in similar pursuits. Somebody must have done some sort of work since 1865, in order to accumulate the five hundred millions of property which the members of the race in the South incontestably own. The negroes are not as a race crowded out of the skilled trades. In some cities, white laborers have taken their places; in others, they still do practically all the building and are engaged in a variety of trades.

Five hundred million dollars is only about a fortieth of the wealth of the South, and the negro surely needs every incitement to intelligence and thrift. While the average negro is held back by licentiousness and the night-prowling habit which seems characteristic of the race, the negro public schools, which did not get under way till after 1871, are doing much to raise the standards of the race. In 1865, probably ninety-five per cent. of the negroes over ten years of age were illiterate; now it is only about fifty per cent., and that does not tell the tale, for, among negro children of school age, nearly three-fourths can read and write, and the proportion is increasing. The Southern States provide secondary education for about fourteen thousand negroes and for about five thousand agricultural, normal and industrial students in higher institutions, besides those educated by endowed schools and colleges.

How far are these schools efficient? A favorite misapprehension in the South is the belief that classical education has somehow unfavorably affected the negro race. Inasmuch as the total number of negroes studying Greek and Latin in 1906, both in secondary and higher schools, was under two thousand, as against sixteen hundred thousand children in the common schools, it would seem that the evil has not as yet penetrated very deeply. The great defect of the colored schools is the lack of trained and intellectual teachers. The South missed its best opportunity to keep in

touch with the negroes and carry them forward in civilization when it refused to permit the young white people to teach the negroes, as the mistresses and children had often done in slavery times. Charleston, South Carolina, is the only large city in which the teachers of the negro public schools are white women, and it can hardly be supposed that those teachers inculcate doctrines of social equality in the minds of their pupils. Education is not a panacea for any race or country; there are educated white men in Sing Sing and proprietors of bucket-shops can read, write and cipher; but a large Mississippi planter says: "You cannot send these people out to fight the battle of life hopelessly ignorant—you cannot, through the helplessness of ignorance, make him the slave of every white man, with no master's protection to shield him."

The capacity of the negro race to take on higher education is contested, though there cannot be any doubt that many mulattoes and some full-bloods have shown high powers of acquisition, forcible use of the mother tongue, and great capacity of personal leadership. The immediate race issue is whether the ordinary, average negro shall be allowed to take on that degree of education, and exercise that degree of self-control and thrift, of which he is capable. There is a school of Southern writers which frankly asserts that the real danger is that the negro will do well. As Thomas Dixon, Jr., says: "Make the negro a scientific and successful farmer, and let him plant his feet deep in your soil, and it will mean a race war." This astonishing doctrine appears to rest upon the delusion that the prosperity of the negro race must somehow be at the expense of the white people. The experience of mankind, the development of the North, shows that, where the working classes are most intelligent and most productive, the other classes of society are most advantaged. In a community where at present the whites, who are two-thirds of the population, hold thirty-nine fortieths of the property, the better off the negro becomes the more likely he is to furnish business and profit for the white people. There is no reason in the nature of things why thrifty negroes and prosperous whites should be more hostile to each other than ignorant negroes and unprogressive whites.

That there is an element in the South, numerous and outspoken, which distinctly hates the negro, would like to drive him

out of the country, and, failing that, wants to keep him in a condition of economic dependence, is shown by the speeches and articles of a few recognized champions of white supremacy, and still more by the expressions of a multitude of white men who live in the midst of negroes. The assistant manager on a plantation, whose livelihood depends on raising a good crop, is exasperated because the negroes do not produce more, and has nothing but ill to say of them; but alongside this class stands a great body of thinking Southern people, who seek the elevation of both races and especially of that which needs it most, not only on philanthropic and religious grounds, but because they believe that the prosperity of the South depends on developing more efficient labor. There is a great cohort of plantation owners, large employers, progressive and public-spirited members of bench and bar, enlightened clergy, college professors, thoughtful business men, who believe, as much as the negro hater, that the race is inferior to the white race, which disclaims and abhors a mixture of the races, yet which expects the negro to remain, to improve, and to help to build up the community. At present that element seems to be dominant in the South.

The Southern problem is thus brought down in its last analysis to the simple question whether the two races can permanently live apart and yet together. That depends, in the first place, on the capacity of the negro to improve far enough to take away the reproach now heaped upon him; and, in the second place, on the willingness of the whites to accept the deficiencies of negro character as a part of the natural conditions of the country, like the infertility of some of the Southern soil, and to leave to him the opportunity to make the most of himself.

In a word, the remedy is patience. Dark as things look in the South, it is subject to the mighty forces of self-interest, of the spirit of humanity, of practical Christianity; if they are applied to the problem, it is not insoluble. The races can live alongside each other, and co-operate, though one be superior to the other. The superiority only throws the greater responsibility on the upper race. Nobody has given better advice to the South than Senator John Sharp Williams: "In the face of this great problem, it would be well that wise men think more, that good men pray more, and that all men talk less and curse less."

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